



**TODAY'S BEST BET**  
Northwest League  
Southern Oregon at Eugene,  
7:05 p.m., Civic Stadium

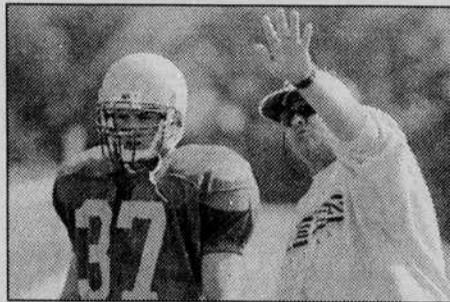
# SPORTS

Oregon Daily  
**Emerald**

**Can the offensive line overcome inexperience?**



**Can the young secondary be depended upon?**



**Who will earn the starting quarterback job?**



## Questions abound at Ducks' camp

■ **FOOTBALL:** The Ducks have depth at the skill positions, but are plagued with inexperience and youth elsewhere

By Joel Hood  
Sports Reporter

A quick pop quiz.

Which Pacific-10 Conference team has won the most league games over the past three seasons?

The same team that ranked second in the Pac-10 last season in passing, second in scoring and third in total offense. The same team that returns one of the conference's top special teams units and most talented corps of running backs and wide receivers.

The answer ... the Oregon Ducks.

If Oregon is to continue its recent success, the coaches and players will have much tougher questions than these to address before its first game on Sept. 4.

The most asked question of spring drills and early season workouts, who will start at quarterback? Head coach Mike Bellotti has sidestepped the question early in camp, maintaining the job is still open for any one of two men to seize.

"I don't think there is any rush to make that decision," Bellotti said. "I think that's a very important decision for our football team. I want our opponent to have to worry about playing both [Maas and Smith] for awhile."

Akili Smith, the team's top acquisition this off-season, considers himself the odds-on-favorite to replace Tony Graziani at quarterback. Smith, tabbed as the nation's top junior college recruit by SuperPrep magazine, ranked fifth in the country in passing last season with 3,212 yards and 32 touchdowns at Grossmont Junior College. The 6-3, 230 pound junior earned first-team All-American honors in 1996.

"If coach Bellotti wants to alternate quar-

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Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti and the Ducks hope to have all their questions answered when they open their season Sept. 4 against Arizona at Autzen Stadium.

PHOTOS BY RYAN FRANK/Emerald

■ **SCHEDULE:** The Ducks open their season with a Pac-10 game for the first time since 1991

By Alex Pond  
Sports Reporter

The Pacific-10 Conference championship race is starting a little earlier for the Ducks this season.

Oregon will have a rare opportunity to get off to a fast start in the Pac-10 race when it plays its home opener against Arizona at Autzen Stadium on Sept. 4.

"Certainly, whichever team wins that is sort of in the driver's seat, and whichever team loses has to scramble to recover," said Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti.

It will be the first time since 1991 that the Ducks will play a Pac-10 game to begin the season and the earliest date they have played a conference game in 12 years.

"Our team is excited about opening with a [conference] game," Bellotti said. "I probably, as a coach, am sort of scared because obviously it doesn't allow you some of the flexibility to try things you might normally do against a non-conference opponent."

The Ducks have had mixed results in recent history when opening the season with a conference game. Although the past two in-

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### 1997 UO FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Sept. 4	vs. Arizona	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 13	at Nevada	1:05 p.m.
Sept. 20	vs. Fresno St.	1 p.m.
Sept. 27	at Stanford	7:15 p.m.
Oct. 4	vs. Washington St.	1 p.m.
Oct. 11	vs. UCLA	1 p.m.
Oct. 18	vs. Utah	1 p.m.
Oct. 25	at USC	7:15 p.m.
Nov. 8	at Washington	12:30 p.m.
Nov. 15	at Arizona State	6 p.m.
Nov. 22	vs. Oregon State	1 p.m.

## Nelson, Ducks say this is their breakout year

■ **VOLLEYBALL:**

Third-year head coach Kathy Nelson is calling this year's team the best in recent memory and says they should prove it in the win column

By Andrea DeYoung  
Freelance Sports Reporter

Two-a-day practices, grueling conditioning, hours and hours of time working out the kinks before the season begins — welcome to August for the Oregon volleyball team.

The Ducks hit the court the first week of August in anticipation of continuing a team-rebuilding process that has been going on since the 1995 season. This was the year when Cathy Nelson took over as head coach at Oregon, and things have been getting better for the Ducks ever since.

When Nelson took over the program,

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## UO to take on nation's best teams



Head coach Bill Steffen and the Ducks meet the media Tuesday.

CHAD PATTESON/Emerald

■ **SOCCER:** In just their second season, the Oregon women will test themselves with a grueling schedule

By Ryan Frank  
Associate Editor

For a team in its second year of existence, Oregon isn't taking things easy.

After going 5-11-2 in its inaugural season last year, head coach Bill Steffen has set out to challenge his team this year.

To call their 1997 schedule tough would be an understatement.

The Ducks, who began practice last Friday, play six recent NCAA Tournament qualifiers, all on the road, 10 straight games on the road over a period of a 1 1/2 months and only five of their 20 games at home.

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